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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

TERRITORIAL AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES TAKE ENFORCEMENT ACTION AGAINST RETAIL STREET DEALERS OF COCAINE, CRACK COCAINE AND HEROIN

United States Attorney Anthony Jenkins, Virgin Islands Attorney General Vincent Frazer, DEA Special Agent in Charge Jerome M. Harris, and Virgin Islands Police Commissioner James H. McCall announce 33 arrests on St. Croix in Operation Shut Dem Down, a joint operation of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area ("HIDTA"). HIDTA consists of law enforcement officers and employees of the Drug Enforcement Administration ("DEA"), Federal Bureau of Investigation ("FBI"), Virgin Islands Police Department ("VIPD"), and the Virgin Islands National Guard ("VING").

Those arrested include: Henry Watson, Renford Nicholas, Listue Lindsay, Henry Mason, Ronald Jacobs, Angel F. Perdermo, John E. Williams, Michael Allan, Pearnell Towers, Inginio Santos Garcia, Joe Quinones, Eustace Jarvis, Charlie Peterson, Ruebin Estein, Adolphus Pennyfeather, Reynald Thomas, Lionel Sackey, Julio Acevedo, Remy Wells, Felicita Carino, Javier Cedando, Shawn Maduro, Carl Fredericks, Elvis Rivera, Angel Dejesus, Luis Cepeda, Alphonso Boyd, Servaine Hendricks, Rajah-I Williams, Ikemadu Phipps, Austin Georges, Laurisa Davis, and Patrick Payne. They were charged in Federal District Court or the Superior Court with distribution of cocaine, crack cocaine or heroin.

The joint operation began in September 2006, and involved approximately 100 purchases of controlled substances from 37 suspects. The purchases were made near Estate Glynn, Estate Profit, downtown Frederiksted, Estate Campo Rico, Estate Western Suburb, Sunday Market Square, and Canegata Ballpark.

"We targeted these areas primarily on citizen complaints," DEA Resident Agent in Charge Gene Hawk said. "In my mind, these are basically citizen arrests. Citizens provided the information and we targeted those areas. Keep the calls coming, we're listening."

DEA Special Agent in Charge Harris stated: “Community involvement is key in ridding neighborhoods and protecting our children from dangerous drugs. These arrests represent how successful we can be when the community get involved. I applaud the community’s efforts.”

Commissioner McCall stated: “Governor deJongh and I have pledged to work closely with the Federal government to address illegal activity in the Territory. This operation is a fruit of that effort.”

United States Attorney Jenkins and Attorney General Frazer said that this operation is intended to demonstrate to those who would deal drugs on the streets of the Virgin Islands that they would not do so with impunity. Jenkins and Frazer said that drug dealing on the streets brings blight to those areas and creates great danger to the citizens of the community and visitors. They said that both federal and territorial law enforcement agencies will move aggressively against those who would destroy the safety of the community.

The National Drug Intelligence Center has reported that cocaine and crack cocaine remain a significant drug threat to the Virgin Islands. These drugs are commonly abused and cause great harm to those who abuse drugs as well as their families. Criminal groups, which are often loosely associated, remain the principal retail-level distributors of cocaine and crack cocaine, and those groups should take notice that their conduct will be prosecuted, Jenkins and Frazer said. These retail distributors represent a serious threat to the health and welfare of Virgin Islanders, contribute to a higher level of violence and endanger Virgin Islands youth in particular as they present easy access to cocaine and crack cocaine and they further drug abuse.

Jenkins and Frazer said that this operation is intended as a local-impact, tactical response to address this retail-distribution crime problem. It is part of the greater overall strategic drug enforcement operations which have resulted in the prosecution of higher level organizations and dealers utilizing wiretaps and undercover investigations.

Jenkins and Frazer said they are committed to a strong cooperative local and federal enforcement approach to crime in the territory.

Several agencies assisted HIDTA with the two-day operation: the U. S. Marshals Service, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (“ICE”), Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (“ATF”), VIPD Blue Lightning Boat Unit, VIPD Bomb Disposal Unit, VIPD K-9 Unit, VIPD Forensics personnel, and the VI National Guard Counterdrug Task Force.

If you have drug-related information and wish to report it, you can do so by calling the HIDTA Task Force at 692-9500 in St. Croix and 774-2398 in St. Thomas. Your information will be kept confidential at your request.

U.S. Attorney Jenkins reminds the public that an arrest is not evidence of guilt, and that, as in all criminal cases, all those charged are presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.